

Upper San Pedro Water Use Mitigation District

Fort Huachuca contributes over \$2 billion annually to Arizona's economy in addition to strengthening our national defense. The Fort's closure, or any significant reduction in its missions, would adversely impact the economies of the state and Cochise County.

The San Pedro River, Fort Huachuca, and all residents of the Upper San Pedro basin depend on groundwater for survival. Unless local governments can achieve sustainable yield of water by 2011, the Fort may lose many of its missions and personnel, or it may close. This is due to the potential adverse impact of the Fort's activities on critical habitat for an endangered species in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

Groundwater pumping intercepts the underground flows that nourish the San Pedro River. Mitigating the pumping requires innovative problem solving and the ability to raise significant amounts of money to fund the ensuing planning and water use mitigation.

Fort Huachuca has made impressive progress in reducing its water consumption, but the Fort has no authority to control water use off the installation. That responsibility lies with the County and the cities within the sub-watershed. However, the cities and the County lack authority to initiate and maintain measures that would preserve the flow of water in the San Pedro River (i.e., achieving sustainable yield of the water supply). Local governments cannot construct, own or operate facilities or pay for projects. However, a special district, given the appropriate authority and revenue sources, could accomplish the critical missions of conservation, reuse, recharge and augmentation of water supplies, thereby helping both the River and the Fort.

The following proposal would provide for appropriate local control, and more importantly, it would be specific only to the Upper San Pedro area, making possible necessary local contributions to reaching sustainable yield. Public Law 108-136, Section 321 and agreements between local governments and Fort Huachuca will require local assistance to achieve sustainable yield in the Subwatershed by 2011 and beyond. Action on this proposal promptly is vital to the future of the Fort and the River.

Proposed Action

A Water Use Mitigation District will assist Cochise County citizens in achieving sustainable water yield in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed, thereby fulfilling the requirements of PL 108-136, Section 321. The general principles governing this District include:

1. The District will adopt a water management plan for the conservation, reuse, recharge, and augmentation of groundwater within the Sierra Vista Subwatershed of the Upper San Pedro River.
2. The District will be authorized to expend funds to accomplish the objectives established in the water management plan.
3. The District may purchase, construct, own, lease, and operate structures, land, and facilities necessary to accomplish the District's mission.
4. A board of directors shall govern the District. The board will consist of one elected official representing Cochise County appointed by the Cochise County Board of Supervisors, one elected official each from the incorporated jurisdictions within the Sierra Vista Subwatershed appointed by the city or town council of each jurisdiction, and two members elected from within the boundaries of the Sierra Vista Subwatershed through a District-wide election. The Cochise County Board of Supervisors shall initially appoint the two at-large members whose term shall run from date of appointment until the next general election.
5. The District board may issue revenue bonds, borrow money, adopt fees, and impose taxes necessary to fund the local contribution to accomplishing the management plan's objectives.
6. The District may accept grants and appropriations from local, state, and federal governments, and gifts or grants from private or public sources.
7. The Upper San Pedro Water Use Mitigation District shall be established by act of the State Legislature.